



A Christmas Miracle

By LANNIE HAYNES MARTIN.

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JOHN SPENCER always knew he was not good enough for Ann Preston, but John Spencer did not know how to tell her so often and so loudly by Ann's people that he was not good enough for her. They only augmented his determination to get Ann. And so John just picked up his bride and his lawbooks and carried them off to the west.

The travel across from Virginia, the opening of a law office, the establishing of a new home, even though a very simple one, made money evaporate very rapidly. And, although no legal business had as yet found its way to John's office, he was always busy getting read up or straightened out or settled down. Ann was extremely lonely and homesick. She cried a good part of the time when John wasn't there.

John was making such a fight. But just now they were having house parties back at home, and peaches were ripe. And here the land was as hot and dry as a desert. The dust got in her throat and, worse still, in her eyes. First there came horrible, disfiguring smoked glasses, then a green eye shade, then a darkened room and pain, constant pain, and then there came a specialist. He pronounced it a very serious case of eye trouble and said she might lose her sight entirely. Her eyes were kept bandaged all the time.

For three months she had been in a darkened room. John Spencer read to her, dressed her, fed her and cared for her as if she were a baby. In those three months his hair had turned gray. Never had she spoken to him of the ones back home. But as Christmas time grew nearer and nearer she would ask every day with such a pathetic quaver in her voice, "Any letters, John?"

It was like a sword stab in his heart. He knew she was looking for a Christmas box, and he knew none would come. He knew them all, especially her uncle James, who had intended making her his heiress before she had disgraced the family by "marrying poor white trash," and her two proud, cold, mercenary sisters. Her parents had died when she was very young.

One day when Ann had asked her little quavering question John Spencer ground his teeth and said to himself, "She's got to have that box." The next day he was later than usual getting in from town, and the next day after, although it was more than two weeks before Christmas, an expressman brought a box and set it on the porch. Ann had heard him drive up and set something down and was all excitement when John arrived.

"Why, here's an express package!" he shouted out as he stepped upon the porch. Then he brought the box into her room and began prying off the lid. "Mrs. Ann Preston Spencer," he said as the boards cracked off. "And it says from Virginia," he continued.

"Oh, oh!" she cried in delight. First he took out an envelope and read, "To Ann with love, from Uncle James. Inside is \$25."

"Just what he always gave me at Christmas!" cried Ann. "And wasn't it dear of him?" John did not reply. He was unfolding a flimsy, sandy, rose colored silk negligee trimmed in coarse, machine stitched lace. "Here is a pink silk evening dress," he said, "and the card says 'From Cousin Harriet.'"

"Oh, how perfectly lovely of her!" exclaimed Ann. "Do let me feel it."

And then there were alleged hand-made and embroidered things marked from Cousin Lucy and Aunt Juliet and some really lovely table linen which had her two sisters' cards on it.

Ann was like a different person, and when the specialist came next time he said there really was some hope for her eyes now.

A neighbor woman, Mrs. Green, took care of her while John was away in town, and when she came in the next morning after the box arrived Ann had her set out all the things.

The cards were all pinned on them.

Somewhat the handwriting looked strangely familiar to Mrs. Green. John Spencer had written a contract for her when she had sold some land. She turned one of the cards over. On the other side, in his black type, was "John Spencer, Attorney at Law." It didn't take the confidences that Mrs. Spencer was now pouring out to make Mrs. Green understand it all.

Then Mrs. Green went home and had a good cry and sent a special delivery letter to Virginia, such a letter as had probably never found its way into that state before. She tried to picture John Spencer as his friends and neighbors saw him, as they had learned to know him—his strength and courage and tenderness—day by day as he cared for his helpless, stricken wife. She was thankful enough not to mention any knowledge of a family estrangement. He had just done this thoughtful, delicate thing because his wife had sighed for something from home, and he tried to satisfy her every wish and whim. When they heard about it they would be only too glad to make that wish come true, and, of course, they must never let Mr. Spencer know that she had written. He would never forgive her.

And it was two weeks yet till Christmas, and a letter would go to Virginia in five days and if they acted real quickly, which Virginians sometimes did, maybe—

John Spencer had always been a

CHRISTMAS ROSEBUDS.

Sharming Belief of Roumanian Peasants in Coming of the Christ Child.

Every year on Christmas eve, they say, the Christ Child, on his way to Germany, comes through the Roumanian hills to gather rosebuds and to kiss into the hearts of those he cannot carry a love charm which has power to awaken a lasting love in the heart of any one to whom it is presented, provided the gift is made in the open air in solitude before the hour of ten and ere a word of greeting has been spoken. On the night before Christmas, therefore, the gypsy swains go rosebud hunting, and on Christmas day the chosen maidens who accept lovers' suits wear the buds.

What roses are to holiday Roumania grapes are to gypsy France. Lovers divide a perfect bunch of them; beggars offer grapes to passersby, expecting in return a coin for each one taken. Similarly in Hungary lovers share a dumpling pie. In Italy a Christmas favor, if it be the last in the bunch, is a token of affection and is saved to light the wedding fire when given by a maiden to her lover. In Spain there are colored lights and fireworks which lovers watch together. And in Somersetshire, England, where the Christmas thorn grows, it was long the custom for young people to gather underneath a thorn tree to hear the buds burst into bloom.

Christmas Is Prophetic

By Rev. Dr. R. S. MAC ARTHUR

THE Christmas observance, fortunately, is becoming more general each year. Many persons who have no religious interest in the season observe it for its delightful social features. This is itself a genuine gain for all the interests of our common humanity. More and more are the religious denominations of all creeds making a part of Christmas a time of religious worship. This also is a change in a wholesome direction.

In celebrating the birth festival of our Lord we hold up before the world the central thought in its history. Christ's incarnation is the event around which all other events revolve in small or larger circles.

This festival is the most joyous celebration of Christendom. It makes the joy of childhood more joyous, and it lightens the burdens of age and sorrow with its tender memories and its triumphant prophecies.

It is prophetic of the golden age when Christ shall come again, when evil shall be overthrown and when the song of a redeemed humanity shall sweep over the universe as the song of celestial choirs echoed over the plains of Bethlehem.

By the gifts which characterize this season we commemorate God's great gift—the unspeakable gift of his Son to a world lost in sin and wandering in darkness. No one can rightly estimate the blessings which flow every year to all classes and conditions of men from the tender memories and gentle charities called forth by the remembrance of the holy child Jesus.

Christmas Bells From Hill to Hill. The time draws near the birth of Christ; The moon is hid; the night is still; The Christmas bells from hill to hill Answer each other in the mist. —Tennyson.

A Christmas Thought

By LUCY LARCOM.

O H, Christmas is coming again, you say, And you long for the things it is bringing. But the costliest gift may not gladden the day Nor help on the merry bells ringing. Some getting is losing, you understand; Some hoarding is far from saving. What you hold in your hand may slip from your hand; There is something better than having. We are richer for what we give. And only by giving we live.

Your last year's presents are scattered and gone, You have almost forgot who gave them, But the loving thoughts you bestow live on. As long as you choose to have them. Love, love is your riches, though ever so poor; No money can buy that treasure, Yours always, from robber and rust secure, Your own without stint or measure. It is only love that we can give; It is only by loving we live.

For who is it smiles, through the Christmas morn— The light of the wide creation? A dear little Child in a stable born Whose love is the world's salvation. He was poor on earth, but he gave us all That can make our life worth living. And happy the Christmas day we call That is spent for his sake in giving. He shows us the way to live; Like him, let us love and give.



very materialistic minded man. That was one thing the Virginia Prestons had against him. But when a sure enough box did come from Virginia by special express on Christmas day, and when that box did contain a pink silk evening dress, quite the loveliest thing he had ever seen, and a real embroidered forget-me-not collar and a rosebud cap such as he had tried to describe to Ann, he just carried off all the first lot of things to a secondhand shop and began reading works on telepathy and mental suggestion and believed to this day that Ann's desire, plus his projected thought, brought that box.

In a few weeks Ann's sight was fully restored, and she was feasting her eyes on the beauties of her gifts. Letters began to go back and forth, and now Christmas boxes go both ways each year across the continent. The one going east has dozens and dozens of luscious western oranges, grown on Spencer's own hundred acre ranch. And now the proud Prestons of Virginia are never prouder than when speaking of "our cousin, Judge and Mrs. Spencer."

Didn't Like the "New" Christmas. The story is told of Thackeray that he was invited to a party at a country house where the host determined to make the experiment of keeping Christmas in "new style." Toward the conclusion of the feast, in which nothing common to a Christmas dinner figured, it was found that Thackeray had disappeared. He was discovered in a corner of the mansion regaling himself on beef and plum pudding, which he had bribed one of the servants to bring him from the kitchen table.

"Jul" Stamps For Christmas. For some years there has been a Christmas stamp issued by the Denmark government. The Denmark stamp is issued by the postoffice and with the king's head on it and the one word "Jul," which is Danish for Yule. It is issued each year at Christmas for the season, and every year from its sale goes to help the fight against tuberculosis in Denmark. It costs a farthing and sells by the millions, having almost double its sale each year for the past few years.